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ABSTRACT

Research was conducted at Camp ASCCA (Alabama's Special Camp for Children and Adults) to investigate the effects of an 11-week outdoor residential camp experience with handicapped campers on their self-esteem, attitude toward handicapped individuals, and locus of control scores of first year counselors with no previous experience. Self-esteem was deleted from the study during the second year. The total number of subjects was 32 (16 males, 16 females) for the first year and 38 (19 males, 19 females) for the second. Four testing times were established; the day of arrival, the end of the fifth week, the last day, and 10 weeks later. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, Rotter Locus of Control Scale, and Lazar Attitude toward Handicapped Individuals Scale were used. During the first year, the females' mean scores were more positive in attitude toward handicapped individuals, than the males. The second year data showed females to have more positive mean scores in attitude toward handicapped individuals, with the males having more internal locus of control. There was a statistically significant difference between the sexes during the first year ($p<.02$), but not during the second ($p<.50$). (JMM)

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A Two Year Study on the Effects of an Outdoor Residential Camp Experience With Handicapped Campers on the Self-Esteem, Attitude Toward Handicapped Individuals and Locus of Control Scores of First Year Counselors

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Jackson's Gap, Alabama

1986

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A TWO YEAR STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF AN OUTDOOR RESIDENTIAL CAMP EXPERIENCE WITH HANDICAPPED CAMPERS ON THE SELF-ESTEEM, ATTITUDE TOWARD HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS AND LOCUS OF CONTROL SCORES OF FIRST YEAR COUNSELORS

Susan Helen Ruzicka, Ed.D.*

Introduction. Counselors are the most significant factor in an outdoor residential camp facility's efforts to make a positive impact upon the camper. As an integral part of the effectiveness of the program and the facility, the counselor provides opportunities in a trusting and constructively reinforcing environment that challenge the camper and counselor to utilize his/her individual and unique capabilities to their fullest.

Counselors are generally between the ages of 18 to 25. Seventy-five to eighty percent are students in college. Many are majoring in a human service delivery profession, such as, Recreation, Therapeutic Recreation, Social Work, Education, Psychology, etc. Only a small percentage have had experience working with the handicapped camper and an even smaller percentage have had experience in a camp environment. Thus, a summer working at a camp for the handicapped camper is a totally new and different experience. It has been noted in several studies that the camp experience can have a lasting, positive effect on the counselor. For the future young professional, these experiences can be invaluable.

Research was conducted at Camp ASCCA (Alabama's Special Camp for Children and Adults) in Jackson's Gap, Alabama. The camp is owned and operated by the Alabama Easter Seal Society. Located on 230 wooded lakefront acres on the northern most shores of Lake Martin in East Central Alabama, it provides a year-round program for the disabled. In 1986, 1100

disabled campers participated in the summer camp program and 2000 disabled campers participated in programs offered throughout the remainder of the year, for a total of 3100 disabled campers.

The first year study investigated the effects of an 11 week outdoor residential camp experience with handicapped campers on the self-esteem, attitude toward handicapped individuals and locus of control scores of first year counselors with no prior residential experience with handicapped individuals. Self-Esteem was deleted from the study during the second year.

For the first year, a one factor sampling design (sex) with a four by three design on the measures (four times of testing by three dependent variables) was used to determine if any statistical significant differences existed between the sexes, between the times of testing, and the interactions of these two effects. A one factor sampling design (sex) with a four by two design on the measures (four times of testing by two dependent variables) was used the second year to determine if any statistical significant differences existed between the sexes, between the times of testing and the interactions of these two effects.

The four times of testing consisted of the following: Pretest (day of arrival at camp), Midtest (end of the fifth week), Post Test (last day at camp), and Follow Up Test (10 weeks following the experience). The three dependent measures were the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Adult Form), Rotter Locus of Control Scale, and Lazar Attitude Toward Handicapped Individuals Scale. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory was not used the second year.

Method. All first year counselors with no prior residential experience with handicapped individuals were selected as subjects for the study. The total number of subjects was 32, 16 males and 16 females the first year; and 38, 19 males and 19 females the second year. The mean ages of the counselors the first year were: male-21 years old and female-20 years old. Mean age for counselors in the second year study were: male-19 years old and female-20 years old.

Counselors were not informed of the purpose of the research. Data collection on the first three testings was done at Camp ASCCA. The data collection for the follow up test (10 weeks following the summer session) was done by mail with 100% return both years.

Results. Descriptive statistics during the first year indicated females' mean scores to be more positive in self-esteem, more internal in locus of control, and more positive in attitude toward handicapped individuals than males' mean scores. Descriptive data of the second year showed females to have more positive mean scores in attitude toward handicapped individuals than males throughout the four testing periods. Males had more internal locus of control mean scores than the females over the four testing periods during the second year.

Multivariate and univariate analyses of variance were conducted to determine the statistical significance at the $p<.05$ level. The multivariate analysis of variance of the sex factor indicated a significant effect. There was a statistically significant difference between males and females during the first year ($p<.02$), but not the second year ($p<.50$). Univariate analysis of variance of the sex effect for

the first year yielded significance in locus of control scores ($p<.01$) and attitude toward handicapped individuals scores ($p<.02$). Thus, during the first year, the difference between the males and females in attitude toward handicapped individuals and locus of control scores were significantly different. Females were more positive in attitude toward the handicapped and more internal in locus of control.

Multivariate analysis of variance of the time of testing effects produced significance ($p<.0001$) the first year and the second year. A univariate analysis of variance of the levels within time of testing indicated the Midtest to be significant for locus of control scores for the first year ($p<.0001$) and the second year ($p<.0001$) and attitude toward handicapped individuals for the second year ($p<.001$). The Post Test period was significant for locus of control scores for the first year ($p<.001$) and for the second year ($p<.003$). The Follow Up test period was significant for locus of control scores for the first year ($p<.003$). During this period, attitude toward handicapped individuals scores were significant the first year ($p<.02$) and the second year ($p<.0001$).

During the first year data analysis, self-esteem scores were not significant on the multivariate analysis of variance. The sex by time of testing interaction was not significant on the multivariate analysis during analysis of data for both years.

Discussion. Results reinforced the review of the literature. Self-esteem is one of the major foundational aspects of the integrated personality and is therefore, protected from rapid change. Studies reviewed on self-esteem changes of handicapped campers and/or staff indicated a postive change but not a statistically significant change.

This was reinforced in the results of this study. Self-esteem scores became more positive for both sexes during the first year over the four testing periods, but these changes were not statistically significant. Self-esteem was deleted from the second year study.

Actual experience with handicapped individuals significantly affects attitude toward handicapped individuals scores in a positive direction and these changes last over time. This is reflective of findings of other studies on attitude toward handicapped individuals.

Locus of control became more internal throughout the first three testings during both years. It then leveled with little change during the follow up testing period. This is reflective of the studies reviewed in the literature. Locus of control scores change initially and then become level and more stable. Studies using a follow up procedure indicated stabilization of the locus of control scores.

Recommendations. It is evident that the attitude the counselor has toward the handicapped camper is an important element. Further research needs to be conducted to investigate the impact of this attitude on the camper and the camp's ability to provide quality experiences for the campers. Correlations between counselors' and campers' attitude toward handicapped individuals and locus of control scores should be established. The effects of an outdoor residential camp experience on self-esteem should be studied in counselors and campers in the format of a longevity study and/or use of qualitative research techniques. A control and an experimental group should be incorporated into the experimental design in an effort to identify factors within the outdoor residential camp experience that cause change in counselors' self-esteem, attitude toward

handicapped individuals and locus of control scores. Repeated measures MANOVA designs should be continued in an effort to identify those time periods in which significant changes occur and the stability of the change in counselors and campers over time. Additional techniques to reinforce findings from self-report instruments should be incorporated into future studies. The use of video taping and observation scales would strengthen findings.

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